

**Riparian Vegetation Management Task Force**  
**DRAFT meeting minutes**  
**Tuesday, May 6, 2008; Gering, Nebraska**

1. Call to order – Chairman Charles Brooks called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m. (MST). Roll call was taken. Task Force members present:

Kent Aden  
Rich Tesar  
Greg Ibach  
Mike Linder  
Senator Cap Dierks  
Russ Shultz

Mike Arps  
Ron Bishop  
Charles Brooks  
Senator Tom Carlson  
Senator John Harms  
Kirk Nelson

Task Force members absent were:

Senator Deb Fischer  
Gloria Erickson  
Jim Miller  
Mike Sarchet

Senator Don Preister  
Mike Clements  
Neil Moseman  
Dr. Gary Cunningham

Task Force members who sent alternates:

Dr. Scott Josiah sent Doak Nickerson  
Bob Bettger, representing Department of Natural Resources.

Guests present included:

Dr. Jerry Kenny  
Annabel Major  
Mark Pfost

NDA staff members:

Mitch Coffin  
Brent Meyer

2. Brooks announced that the meeting was not being recorded due to a malfunction with the recording equipment.
3. Brooks noted the availability of a copy of the Nebraska Open Meetings Act. He noted for the record that notice for today's meeting was published in the *Omaha World-Herald* on April 20, the *Kearney Hub* on April 22, and in the *McCook Daily Gazette* on April 18.
4. Brooks opened discussion on the minutes from the March 26, 2008, meeting. Ibach made a motion to approve the minutes. Linder seconded the motion.

Roll call vote: In support of the motion: Aden, Arps, Tesar, Bishop, Ibach, Brooks, Linder, Senator Carlson, Senator Dierks, Senator Harms, Shultz, Nelson. Voting against the motion: none.

5. Under Old Business.

Ibach reported on the action by NDA to designate phragmites as a statewide noxious weed under the temporary designation. Senator Dierks expressed concern for how this

designation would affect native phragmites. Ibach explained that this designation only applies to non-native phragmites.

6. Under new Business.

Dr. Jerry Kenny gave a report on the Platte River Recovery Implementation Project. This is a new program designed to protect threatened and endangered species throughout the Platte River system. The critical habitat for this project is Lexington to Chapman. However, they will work on the entire Platte River. Dr. Kenny reported that they are willing to work with current and ongoing control projects that are taking place in the Platte River. They have been involved with the Platte Valley Weed Management Area and will continue to assist them with technical support where possible.

The three birds of concern in the Critical Habitat area are the whooping crane, least tern, and piping plover. The Platte River is an important roosting and nesting site. Bare sandbars, braided river channel, and limited woody vegetation in the channel are important for these three species of birds. Their goal is to restore some areas of the river but do not intend to change the entire area. The plan is to acquire or gain access to 10,000 acres between Lexington and Chapman.

Goals and issues that need to be addressed:

Invaders

- Phragmites – Unsure how to deal with this one.
- Eastern redcedar – Restore grasslands.
- Saltcedar.
- Russian olive.

Mandated

- Increase flow – North Platte chokepoint project, sprayed 28 acres of phragmites in 2007.

Learning and Getting Involved

- Prescribed fire training.
- Platte Valley Weed Management Area.
- Riparian Vegetation Management Task Force vegetation management and treatment workgroup.
- Support applied research in Critical Habitat area – Need to have untreated areas for research.

Nelson stressed there is overlap between LB 701 and the Platte River Recovery Implementation Project and suggested that those involved continue to work together and build partnerships. It was suggested that Senator Carlson work with Dr. Kenny when introducing new legislation.

The invasive Species Council report was moved to follow the Work Group Reports.

7. Work Group Reports.

- a. **Streambed Ownership:** Russ Shultz reported that his work group met April 14. They have added a duty to recommend options for streambed vegetation management responsibility and developed a proposal for the work group's next steps. Shultz reported that three new members have been included in their group. Nebraska Association of County Officials, Shandy Bittle – State GIS coordinator for NRCS and Ruth Sorensen – Property Tax Administrator. Awareness and education needs to be improved for those involved with ownership issues. (A handout was provided to attending members).
- b. **Vegetation Management and Treatment:** Kent Aden reported on the progress made by his group. They have scheduled a meeting with the Platte River Recovery Implementation Project (May 13,) to discuss and coordinate any research that may be in progress or planned in the Platte River system as well as other rivers systems that may be related to LB 701. His group has preliminarily selected five sites for the study project. Those sites will be finalized in the next couple of weeks so work can begin. Sites will include all or part of a disking, grazing, mowing, and herbicide replication throughout the season. Year one will be funded by the High Plains Weed Management Association through the Nebraska Environmental Trust. The work group will apply to the Trust for year two and three.
- c. **Survey and Monitoring:** Rich Tesar reported that his work group has not met since the last Task Force meeting. However, they have done some cost estimates that suggest that \$200,000 would be needed to conduct an annual survey. Papio NRD has committed funding for vegetation control in the Lower Platte for treatment of 18 miles to treat phragmites and woody species in the river channel.
- d. **Education and Awareness:** Bob Bettger reported on behalf of Mike Clements. This group last met on April 9. The group discussed the possibility of partnering with the Nebraska Invasive Species Council which may be officially formed in the near future. It appears that there is overlap that both the Council and work group can collaborate and work towards a common goal. The Council could serve as the anchor or starting point with assistance from NDA for invasive species education and trickling down to weed management areas, weed associations, RC&Ds, NRDs, UNL Extension, and NRCS. The group's next meeting is scheduled for May 29, at 10:00 a.m. at the Central Platte NRD office in Grand Island.
- e. **Funding and Incentives:** Mike Arps reported that they have not taken any action since the last Task Force meeting. His group welcomes any suggestions or input from other Task Force members. They will be working closely with Senator Carlson regarding new legislation.
- f. **Goals, Objectives, and Reports:** Senator Carlson reported that the original intent of LB 701 is to clear vegetation from the streambed to improve the conveyance of water. He feels this will restore the carrying capacity for

agriculture, endangered species, fish and wildlife, recreation, and improved forest management. Senator Carlson said he believes there are no negative effects to date regarding any work that has been completed on the rivers. He believes this work has had nothing but positive effects and everyone is working towards a common goal. Doak Nickerson commented that everyone needs to keep envisioning how to best utilize these invasives. Senator Harms said the Appropriations Committee is projecting a shortfall and that any new legislation needs to be a priority with support from the Governor.

- g. Vegetation Water Use:** Ron Bishop reported that he is now the Chairman for this group. They have not met since the last Task Force meeting but will be meeting with staff from the Department of Natural Resources on May 14, to discuss how they might be able to assist with this group.

#### 8. Invasive Species Council

Annabel Major with the US Fish and Wildlife Coop Unit reported that they hope to coordinate a Nebraska Invasive Species Council to address concerns across the state. One of the goals is to promote collaboration among all groups performing invasive species control and share information through their web site. A group of interested agencies has met on two occasions to discuss the formation of a statewide council. This group plans to develop a strategic plan over the next few months.

#### 9. Other Items

- a. Ibach provided handouts to the members regarding the Riparian Vegetation Management Grants that NDA awarded. There were \$6.8 million in requests for 08-09. Ibach announced that five projects will receive partial funding for a total of \$2 million. There were a total of eight applications submitted to NDA.
- b. Mitch Coffin reported that Steve Chick with NRCS had submitted a list of names from his agency that could serve on the work groups. Coffin had previously forwarded those names and contact information to the work group chairs.
- c. Brooks opened the floor for discussion. Senator Dierks expressed his concern regarding the state of our country and asked that everyone exercise their right to vote.
- d. The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for July 17, in the Franklin or Alma area, with a tour of some control efforts that have taken place on the Republican River the past 12 months. The members expressed an interest in having the Governor attend the next Task Force meeting. Ibach said he will check the Governor's schedule and see if he might be available on that date or near that date.

#### 10. The meeting adjourned at 11:05 a.m.